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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 007590

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [CO](#) [ELN](#) [FARC](#)

SUBJECT: NATIONAL CONCILIATION COMMISSION: SLOW PROGRESS
WITH FARC AND ELN

REF: BOGOTA 7358

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1. (C) On August 8, PolCouns met with Father Dario Echeverri (protect), Secretary General of the National Conciliation Commission (CCN). He predicted the FARC would agree to a humanitarian exchange after the Constitutional Court had ruled on re-election because -- regardless of the ruling -- the FARC's political prisoners, possibly including the three U.S. hostages, would no longer provide the group leverage over the Uribe administration. Echeverri will travel to Europe on August 12 to examine Spanish, Swiss, and French efforts to facilitate FARC talks. He expressed optimism the CCN could work with the Spanish and Swiss. He said jailed ELN spokesman Francisco Galan's communiques were uncompromising, but that Galan insisted the ELN was willing to consider talks.

FARC: Waiting for Ruling on Re-election

2. (C) Echeverri told PolCouns the CCN was continually trying to facilitate humanitarian exchange talks between the FARC Secretariat and the Government. On July 5, newly appointed

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Cardinal Monsenor Luis Castro directed Echeverri to send a letter to the FARC Secretariat with three points: (1) the CCN was committed to opening space for a peace process; (2) it was eager to facilitate talks between the FARC and Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo about a humanitarian exchange; and (3) Cardinal Castro wanted to meet personally with the Secretariat to discuss the Church's goal of having peace in Colombia by 2010. As of August 8, the FARC had not responded.

3. (C) Echeverri predicted the FARC would not agree to a humanitarian exchange or any kind of meeting with the GOC until after the Constitutional Court had ruled on re-election. Regardless of the Court's decision, Echeverri predicted the FARC would release its political hostages after the ruling. If the Court ruled that President Uribe could not run again, the FARC would not have to worry about giving Uribe a political boost by releasing the prisoners. If the Court ruled in favor of Uribe's re-election the FARC would not want the burden of maintaining the hostages for five more years.

4. (C) In response to PolCouns' inquiry about efforts by other politicians and countries to reach out to the FARC, Echeverri said he would travel to Europe on August 12 to learn more about Spanish, Swiss, and French efforts. He expressed optimism that the CCN could work with the Swiss and Spanish to facilitate talks but was wary of French efforts (reftel). Echeverri warned that former Minister Alvaro Leyva and former President Ernesto Samper were trying to force themselves into a peace process for political gain and had been pressuring the CCN for support. He said the CCN might consider working with former President Alfonso Lopez but not with Leyva or Samper.

5. (C) Echeverri noted that military operations in Putumayo Department had forced the Secretariat to abandon its efforts there and flee the area. On July 28, the CCN issued a public communique urging the FARC to cease all hostilities against the civilian population of Putumayo. (Separately, senior Colombian military officials told the Embassy they feel they are making progress against the FARC in Putumayo.)

ELN: Some Hope

6. (C) Echeverri said the recent, seemingly uncompromising communiques from the ELN to the GOC were drafted by jailed ELN representative Francisco Galan at the direction of the ELN Central Command (COCE). Although the communiques were tough, Galan continued to insist his message was that the ELN

was open to a peace process. Echeverri noted that the press was incorrect when it claimed he had attended a meeting between Galan and members of the Civil Society Facilitating Commission for ELN Talks. He would not get involved in politically motivated efforts to start a peace process.

Comment

17. (C) Regardless of Echeverri's assessment that the FARC will seek to release the hostages following the Constitutional Court ruling, no matter how it comes out, the Government continues to press its intelligence and military efforts on the hostages.

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